

SECRET

26 Jan. 1962

Soviet Conscription

(Response to Request from General Harshey)

Each year the USSR conscripts men for its armed forces and militarized security forces during a formal induction period. The men are conscripted by age group with the great majority of the annual call-up being from among those reaching their nineteenth birthday during the year. About 10 percent of each group is exempted for medical reasons and probably an additional 5 percent for other reasons. Most students are able to obtain deferments but current Soviet policy is to require prior work experience before admitting high school graduates to colleges and other educational institutions. Thus, the number of students likely to be qualified for deferment at the age of nineteen has been sharply reduced and is probably some 5 to 10 percent of a given age group at the present time.

About 75 percent of the Soviet military forces are conscripts, 5 percent career enlisted men, and 20 percent career officers. All conscripts serve for three years with the exception of naval conscripts serving afloat who serve for four years. Because such a large proportion of the military and security forces turns over each year, the annual drafting and discharge of conscripts is a convenient mechanism for altering the size of the forces in comparative secrecy. Only when the USSR finds it politically expedient are changes publicly announced.

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Military quotas for each of the 15 military districts of the USSR are based on considerations of size and ethnic characteristics of the population, job and educational qualifications, and political status. The number of men conscripted annually has never been announced. It is estimated that the annual requirements have ranged from approximately one million men in 1958 to about 800 thousand in 1961. In 1958 this represented about 50 percent of the number of men available after deductions for exemptions and deferments and nearly 85 percent in 1961. Because of the low birth rates in the USSR during World War II maintenance of present force levels, without marked change in recent practice, will require conscription of a very high proportion of the available 19 year olds and some 21 years of age and older as well.

Whereas until the mid-1950's most of the conscripts were from rural areas and had an average of four years or less of schooling, the military forces now are taking increasing numbers of technically trained men. Perhaps one-third of those currently conscripted have had some technical training following completion of grade school. About one-half of those conscripted are still from rural areas and probably have less than a grade school education. The remainder of the quota is thought to be made up of high school graduates and their proportion is probably increasing. However, until very recently high school graduates received little or no technical training.

John -

House Apporp.

Attached is a statement developed by ORR and checked out by OCI which DD/I has given us for relay to Selective Service Hqs. Both Otto Guth and Mr. Sheldon concur in its release, as does Col. Grogan, with the stipulation however that CIA source not be made known by General Hershey.

As I indicated to [redacted] last week, I'm forwarding to you for your clearance prior to taking to Sel. Service Hqs. Will you give me a ring?

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